

SCIENCE & EDUCATION Impact

Benefits from USDA/Land-Grant Partnership

An Apple a Day. . .

Teaching people to eat better and exercise more helps prevent costly diseases.

In today's fast-paced world, many families are relying more on expensive take out and ready-to-eat prepackaged meals for their nutritional needs. At the same time, they are more sedentary, opting to watch TV or use the computer than walk around the neighborhood. These people are prime candidates for conditions such as obesity, clogged arteries and hypertension.

Payoff

- **Calculating calories online.** A lot of Land-Grant university nutrition information is just a click away on the computer. For example, the Nutrition Analysis Tool, located at www.nat.uiuc.edu, lets people analyze nutrients in the foods they eat and identifies exactly where their excess calories, fat, sugar and cholesterol come from. This free **Illinois** Web site is accessed by more than a million people monthly, from high school and college students to health care professionals.
- **Weighty matters.** Extension wellness programs are helping Americans to feel better and lose weight. In **Arkansas**, 231 people participated in a 15-week walking program, where each lost an average of 9.5 pounds; 62 percent lowered their blood pressure and 72 percent reduced their cholesterol level. **Georgia's** six-week "Weight Off Wisely" program helped people in one county lose an average of 9 pounds. One 46-year-old participant in **Nevada's** "Health at Work" program lost 55 pounds, controlled his high blood pressure and now eats a low-fat diet and exercises five days a week.
- **Dissing diabetes.** Diabetes kills more than 193,000 Americans each year and costs billions in health care. Extension personnel in **Nevada** have developed a diabetes prevention program targeting Hispanics, African-Americans and Native Americans. So far, 600 participants have collectively saved more than \$4.4 million in medical costs by changing to healthier lifestyles. Participants in diabetes education programs in **Louisiana**, **New York** and **West Virginia** have witnessed similar results.
- **Different cultures, different educational needs.** Land-Grant extension personnel have created numerous nutrition programs that target the unique needs of various ethnic groups. A **Colorado State** program, called "La Cocina Saludable: The

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Healthy Kitchen,” recruits and trains Hispanic grandmothers to help migrant/limited-income Hispanic mothers prepare more healthful meals for their families. Follow-up interviews show that 78 percent of the program participants now make more nutritious food choices. **California** Extension educators have helped low-income Vietnamese women obtain more calcium from foods they may be unfamiliar with, such as milk and cheese, and to eat the recommended number of servings from all of the food groups. Fresh fruits and vegetables are often not available on Indian reservations. **South Dakota’s** “Cultivating Generations” involves helping reservations start community gardens, which volunteers maintain, and the fresh vegetables are distributed at no cost to the reservation’s citizens, starting with the elderly. Since the project started two years ago, the number of community gardens has grown from two to 56, and citizens are eating more fresh vegetables.

- **No more puny babies.** Infants born to teen-age mothers have a lower chance of survival because of low birth weights. A **Georgia** Extension educational program in one county taught pregnant teens about prenatal nutrition. Only 2 percent of participants’ babies were born with low weight compared to 9.8 percent for the state. Participants in **New Hampshire’s** pre-natal nutrition program for teens had fewer C-sections and delivered more babies with normal birth weights than the state’s average.
- **Stamping out bad nutrition.** Land-Grant university extension educators offer many national programs, such as the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program and the Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program, to help limited-income people and food stamp recipients to manage their food budget wisely and buy and prepare more nutritious foods for their families. Through **Idaho’s** nutrition program, 93 percent of the participants changed their diets to consume the recommended number of servings in the five food groups. **Montana, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, Nevada, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia** and **Wyoming** nutrition programs saw similar results. These nutrition and wellness information programs are vital to the nation’s

health and wealth — a **Virginia Tech** study found that the nation saves \$3.60 for every dollar spent on nutrition education.

- **Can you handle the data? We can.** Food companies and policymakers need detailed information on what, when and how much people eat to help them make decisions on labeling, marketing and recipe analysis. **Michigan State** researchers have created a national clearinghouse that contains free information about the dietary intake of hundreds of thousands of people. Policymakers and researchers at universities and small food companies find the one-stop data shop invaluable in their food and nutrition studies.
- **More fruits, less fried food.** African-American, Hispanic and Native American populations are more susceptible to obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease than are other population groups. Extension educators from the **University of Arkansas-Pine Bluff**, Oklahoma’s **Langston University**, Missouri’s **Lincoln University**, Texas’ **Prairie View A&M University**, **South Carolina State** and Louisiana’s **Southern University** have teamed up to create “Families First: News,” a unique nutrition education program designed specifically for people in these population groups who are on food stamps or have low incomes. Participants report that they now include more fruits and vegetables in their meals, eat less fried foods, manage money for meals more wisely, and exercise at least three times a week.



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